

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An electrical connector, comprising:

a housing having a mating face that is configured to be mounted onto an electrical connector interface; and

a latch assembly provided on a side wall of said housing, said latch assembly ~~being oriented to extend along said side wall, said latch assembly having a latch element formed on an end thereof proximate said mating face, said latch assembly~~ including cantilevered upper and lower beams extending along said side wall and mounting brackets separated from one another along a length of said latch assembly, said mounting brackets joining said latch assembly to said side wall, said latch assembly having a portion between said mounting brackets that is deflectable toward said side wall.

2. (Currently amended) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly includes ~~cantilevered upper and lower beams extending along said side wall and includes~~ rear and intermediate mounting brackets integrally joining said upper and lower beams, respectively, to said side wall.

3. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly includes at least one cantilever beam projecting forward from said mounting brackets toward said mating face and a grip portion located between said mounting brackets.

4. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly flexes between said mounting brackets to rotate said latch element toward and away from said mating face.

5. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 1, further comprising a shroud provided along at least a portion of said side wall, said shroud overlapping said end of said latch assembly including said latch element.

6. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 1, further comprising a shroud extending outward from said side wall, said shroud having a flange spaced apart from said side wall to define a latch operation gap therebetween, said latch assembly including a beam extending along said latch operation gap, said beam pivoting laterally within said latch operation gap.

7. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly includes a pair of parallel beams having rear ends formed with a rear mounting bracket to said side wall, said beams being spaced apart from said side wall at an intermediate point by intermediate mounting brackets.

8. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 6, wherein said shroud is configured to limit a range of pivotal motion of said latch assembly.

9. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly includes a beam that pivots inward and outward toward and away from said side wall, said connector further comprising a shroud extending beyond and partially covering said beam.

10. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 1, wherein said latch assembly includes a raised grip formed on said portion between said mounting brackets, said portion being normally biased outward away from said side wall, said portion being deflectable inward toward said side wall to release said latch element.

11. (Currently amended) An electrical connector, comprising:

a housing having a mating face that is configured to join an electrical connector interface;

a shroud provided on a side wall of said housing, said shroud having an outer flange spaced from said side wall to define a gap therebetween; and

a latch assembly pivotally provided on said side wall, said latch assembly being oriented to extend along said side wall, said latch assembly ~~having a latch element formed on an end thereof~~ including an upper beam and a lower beam extending along said side wall, and a cross bar joining said upper and lower beams proximate said mating face, at least a forward portion of said latch assembly being located within said gap and being pivotal between said shroud and said side wall.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently amended) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein ~~said latch assembly includes cantilevered upper and lower beams extending along said side wall and~~ said upper and lower beams are cantilevered along said side wall and said latch assembly includes rear and intermediate mounting brackets integrally joining said upper and lower beams, respectively, to said side wall, at least a forward portion of said upper and lower beams pivotally rotating transversely within said gap.

14. (Currently amended) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said latch assembly includes an intermediate mounting bracket joining said latch assembly to said side wall, said latch assembly ~~further comprising~~ including at least one cantilever beam projecting forward from said intermediate mounting bracket toward said mating face and a grip portion located rearward from said intermediate mounting bracket.

15. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said forward portion of said latch assembly pivots about a rotational axis extending transversely through said latch assembly at an intermediate point along said length of said latch assembly, said forward portion laterally moving within said gap, said gap being oriented perpendicular to said rotational axis.

16. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said shroud has a flange spaced apart from said side wall to define said gap as a latch operation gap, said latch assembly including a beam extending along said latch operation gap, said beam pivoting laterally within said latch operation gap.

17. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said shroud does not overlap a rear portion of said latch assembly, said rear portion having a grip surface that is pressed toward said side wall to release said latch element.

18. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said shroud is configured to limit a range of pivotal motion of said latch assembly.

19. (Original) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said latch assembly includes a beam that pivots inward and outward toward and away from said side wall, said shroud extending beyond and partially covering said beam.

20. (Currently amended) The electrical connector of claim 11, wherein said latch assembly includes mounting brackets joining said latch assembly to said side wall, said latch assembly having a portion between said mounting brackets, and a raised grip formed on said portion between said mounting brackets, said portion being normally biased outward away from said side wall, said portion being deflectable inward toward said side wall to release said latch element.

21. (New) An electrical connector, comprising:

a housing having a mating face that is configured to join an electrical connector interface;

a shroud provided on a side wall of said housing, said shroud having an outer flange spaced from said side wall to define a gap therebetween; and

a latch assembly pivotally provided on said side wall, a length of said latch assembly extending along a length of said side wall, said latch assembly including an upper beam and a lower beam and mounting brackets separated from one another along a length of said latch assembly, said mounting brackets joining said latch assembly to said side wall, said latch assembly having a portion between said mounting brackets that is deflectable toward said side wall, said forward portion of said latch assembly rotating laterally within said gap about one of said mounting brackets when said portion of said latch assembly between said mounting brackets is deflected toward said side wall.